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ABSTRACT

The report presents major presentations given at a 1-day conference on integration of the handicapped in British schools attended by parents, teachers, social workers, psychologists, and education officers. In the first presentation, M. Vaughan presents philosophical and practical arguments which support eliminating the segregation of children with special needs into separate schools and units. In the next paper, R. Kidd, head of a special school for children with severe learning disabilities, reports on the successful transfer of half of the school's population of physically and mentally handicapped children to nearby regular schools. Next, E. Arrondelle, mother of a Down Syndrome child, describes her family's difficulties in obtaining ordinary school education for the child. Finally, D. Mongon proposes establishment of a national education service which will merge the principle of integration with the principle of comprehensive schooling. Major issues considered in discussion groups are summarized and include identification of preschool priorities, the role and rights of parents, practical ways to implement integration, and the need for immediate implementation of the integration philosophy by all. (DB)

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Integration

In Education

the way forward

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1981 Education Act
Conference Report

by Christine Orton

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Introduction

'Integration in Education — the way forward' was the title of a day conference held by CSIE at Regent's College, London on Saturday, July 6, 1985.

The conference came during an historic week in the development of integration of children with special educational needs into ordinary schools, with the publication a few days earlier of the Fish Report by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA)

'Integration has been given a clean name,' said Mark Vaughan of CSIE in opening the conference. 'It has received, through Fish, the strongest support so far as being a totally valid principle. I feel that the Fish Report will give integration — or the ending of segregation — its first official cloak of respectability by any LEA in England or Wales.

'I also think that this investigation of ILEA's special education provision will be of enormous benefit to all 104 local education authorities (LEAs), and with the political backing that it seems it will get in the months and years ahead, it is a significant step forward in the debate surrounding the implementation of the 1981 Education Act.'

The main theme of the day was the necessity to make special education *ordinary,* so that the provision for children with special needs is seen as an integral part of mainstream schooling, right through from the pre-school years to infant, junior and secondary school, and on to further education and later career and life opportunities.

There were four speakers whose main points are outlined in this report. Mark Vaughan of CSIE spoke on the philosophical and practical arguments that support an end to segregation of children with special needs in separate schools and units. Roger Kidd, head of Bishopswood School in Oxfordshire for children with severe learning difficulties, told of the successful transfer of half of the school's population of physically and mentally handicapped children to nearby ordinary nursery, primary and comprehensive schools.

In the afternoon Elizabeth Arrondelle, mother of nine year-old Kirsty who has Down's Syndrome, talked movingly of the battle she and her husband have had in order to achieve education in an ordinary school for their daughter. Summing up the main theme of the day, Denis Mongon, advisory teacher with ILEA and member of the Fish Committee, asked for a national education service which merged the principle of integration with the principle of comprehensive schooling.

Delegates included parents, members of parent groups teachers, social workers, health visitors, educational pyschologists and education officers. Working groups were held on various topics and are reported under **Talking Points.** No-one pretended that there were no problems or pitfalls such as worries about finance and resources: questions on the reality of the partnership between professionals and parents encouraged by the 1981 Education Act, and doubts about the assessment and statementing procedures. But the day gave an opportunity for many of these to be aired.

Integrating special education — a new perspective

Special education has its place — but that place should be in the ordinary school, said Mark Vaughan, co-ordinator of the Centre for Studies on Integration in Education (CSIE). Recent CSIE evidence from a questionnaire to schools and colleges shows a slow shift towards this view, with new and exciting initiatives being established in many areas.

Seana Cahill

Mark Vaughan

Is 'integrating special education' a nonsense? That is, either we have special education taking place in separate special schools or we don't, and if we don't, surely we simply have ordinary education? I feel that the concept of special education is a good one; I think we should keep it; that we should develop it — but that we should make a commitment to changing the setting where traditionally it has always taken place.

If we accept that it is possible to integrate special education then we also have to accept that this implies some considerable changes. This area of education (which I believe is fundementally linked to mainstream education) has already gone through remarkable and radical changes over the last few years and is still going through them.

These changes — in assessment techniques and procedures, parental involvement, integration, access to information and so on — have implications for all those involved in representing the educational and social rights of children with special needs. Though some of the changes seem small and though there is still no large-scale movement towards integration by LEAs in England and Wales, nevertheless the changes herald a certain shift in attitudes and emphasis.

This shift is paralleled elsewhere in society to some degree in areas such as access to buildings, employment of disabled people, adapted housing, and disability theatre groups. Essentially this is concerned with how we view 'disability'; whether or not, society — that is, *all* of us — accept the *normality* of disability. I think this begins to give us a new perspective on special education provision.

Making A Choice

Changes in placements *have* taken place. Practice up and down the country now shows that what was considered impossible or even outrageous a few years ago is part of everyday life for teachers, pupils and parents in many ordinary primary and comprehensive schools, and for the various professionals involved in assessment and placement of children with special needs.

Looking back we can see that a hundred years ago the criteria for selection in education were offensive, degrading and innacurate and essentially based on a medical model of assessment, classification and placement. Insanes, feeble-minded, defectives, cretins, ineducable were some of the terms used.

Coming up to more recent times maladjusted, educationally sub-normal (moderate) and educationally sub-normal (severe) were the common descriptions — all, of course, abolished along with the nine other official Department of Education and Science categories when the Education Act came into force on April 1, 1983 . . . or were they?

Times have certainly changed, but has the basic concept? That it, a concept which says it is alright to draw a line between so-called normal and abnormal. It is a line that is used by the local education service with total executive power and one which says that it is preferable for all concerned to isolate a small group and provide for them separately. In the meantime what chance is there for the establishment of local, community-based comprehensive system of nursery, primary and secondary-level schooling?

It would seem that 100-year-old concepts about segregating 'defectives' take a long time to die away in spite of legislation; in trying to find a new perspective, I think it is important to at least be aware of outdated language and attitudes and realise that they are still being used.

Education Act

What is the 1981 Education Act asking of us and what kind of legislation is it turning out to be? I have

described it elsewhere as a 'Chameleon Act' — it really does change colour as you travel around the country to see how different LEAs implement the new law.

There are many things wrong with it, but as a Government's response to the five year long Warnock Committee's investigation into special education in England, Scotland and Wales, it is here to stay and will provide a structural framework for special education for many years to come. I feel it is a minimal piece of legislation but that education and health authorities should see it as a base-line from which to develop more progressive and fairer local services.

Having just returned from a three week study of mainstreaming in Massachusetts, North America, the stark difference between the two integration sections in the two laws, is that here it is so heavily qualified with provisos as to effectively diminish the chances of integration taking place. In Massachusetts the law places duties on schools and LEAs (not to mention giving remarkably superior rights for parental involvement and appeal) to ensure integration, or what they term 'the least restrictive environment', for as many children as possible.

One of the real breakthroughs of our 1981 Act has been parental access to records and reports — these are the first parents to be given legal rights to have copies of reports on which authorities base decisions about provision for a child. Inevitably there are problems. There was considerable opposition from some towards parental access, and there are examples of secret 'second-tier' reports circulating at professional level, even though, quite clearly, this is illegal.

I think, too, that the 1981 Act has thrown up a conflict of loyalties for professionals. Who do they support — the children and families who they come to know well, or their employers who are placing increasing restrictions on them? Parents' expectations are high and the subsequent frustration they often feel over assessment processes, decisions on placements, or simply trying to get a good education for their handicapped child at all, is great.

Principles in Practice

As Tony Booth says in the book 'Integrating Special Education': 'All children with special needs challenge the capacity of ordinary schools to adapt their curricula and form of organisation to diverse needs and interests.' He goes on to add that arguments in favour of integration commonly meet with the response that ordinary schools 'have to put their own house in order, before they should include others . . .'

As he points out, the problem in calling for an initial perfection of the ordinary school system is that separate special schools could easily be retained indefinitely. What is perfect anyway? A commitment to the principle surely also means a commitment to putting the principle into practice.

I don't think there are any blue-prints or models to be imported from other parts of the country or from practice overseas. There are lessons to be learned, but because integration is a process, the changes should take place according to local circumstances and not because someone goes off and finds 'the perfect model'.

This was confirmed to me by schools in Massachusetts where I saw a wide variety of mainstreaming — or a commitment to reducing segregation — ranging from children spending very little time out of their special classes, to those who spent all their time in ordinary classes and were able to keep up.

It has also been confirmed by the response to the CSIE questionnaire for our register of integrated schools and colleges. 1,000 schools and colleges in England and Wales out of the 5,000 that have so far received it have filled it in saying that they have some degree or other of integration going on in their schools, giving details of resources and equipment to support those children.

Whether integration is full or part-time, it seems to me that the goal must in every case be the full participation in the educational and social life of ordinary schools. Practice now shows that this is possible for the vast majority of children.'

Mark Vaughan

The Pierce School, Brookline, Massachusetts — 'a commitment to reducing segregation'.

Bishopswood Special School — a recent initiative

Bishopswood Special School in Sonning Common, Oxfordshire has achieved the apparently impossible, and integrated half of its severely physically and mentally handicapped pupils into nearby ordinary schools. In the opinion of headmaster Roger Kidd, this proves that such a move is not only possible but preferable, and paves the way for other LEAs and schools to follow suit.

Seana Cahill

Roger Kidd

'One of the earliest voluntary bodies, which in mid-Victorian times helped to change the attitudes of fear and derision that handicapped people had to put up with for years, called itself the Guild for the Brave Young Things.

The Guild did not last long, but that attitude of condescending paternalism embodied in the title, persists, and indeed still colours, the efforts to help handicapped people today. Handicapped people are not poor, brave things. They are human beings with hopes and fears, loves and hates like the rest of us and they want to lead a life as near to ours as their handicap will permit. They don't want protection from society, they want to be accepted.

This is at last being realised, not only in this country but I think world-wide, and positive steps are being taken to make as near a normal life for handicapped people as possible. And one part of this world-wide move towards normality is the attempt to educate handicapped children in ordinary schools.

However, many teachers regard this move towards integration with apprehension. Those in special schools fear it will result in the dismantling of a system they have devoted their lives to building up. Those in ordinary schools fear that handicapped children with physical and emotional needs they cannot meet, will suddenly appear in their already over-sized classes without additional resources to help them.

Worries that exist can be strengthened by the attitudes of various pressure groups. Integration will not come overnight with guaranteed success — the willy-nilly placing of handicapped children in ordinary schools without additional resources, without the transfer of expertise and staffing, and without a real willingness and commitment on the part of the ordinary schools to have these children, would be an absolute disaster and would put the whole integration movement back decades.

We know that integration is right, but it is not easy to change attitudes, and the whole thing must be carefully thought out; the special needs of the child must be properly catered for. Without that the child would be absolutely miserable. Nor is the integration of special needs pupils into ordinary school a cheap alternative to provision in special schools.

There is no short-cut and the schools that benefit most are the ones that undergo a reappraisal of the whole school system, looking again at the educational and social processes and values which play an integral part in the running of the school.

Advantages of Integration

So what are the advantages for handicapped children attending an ordinary school? Many, but one of the most important and obvious is that it is more *normal*, and surely the strive towards normality ought to be the main aim of special education, otherwise it is pointless.

Of course, there *should* be less stigma attached to special needs pupils attending an ordinary school. But if children with special needs are not really accepted, if they are rejected and hidden away, it can be more of a stigma than if they attended separate special school. But to deny integration is, to put it crudely, a type of educational apartheid.

Another advantage for handicapped children attending the ordinary school is that they can benefit from the better facilities generally found there. At Chiltern Edge we now have use of the swimming pool, pottery and science labs. We also avoid that truly traumatic experience of a child suddenly being ascertained as in need of special education and being removed from the school he or she has until that time attended, removed from friends and even family if the new school is residential.

I've met children who have been rejected because

they attended the 'backy' school — a stigma indeed, and one we will only destroy by allowing handicapped children to receive their education alongside non-handicapped peers, not by hiding them away, which by the very nature of doing so inculcates the belief that they are very different.

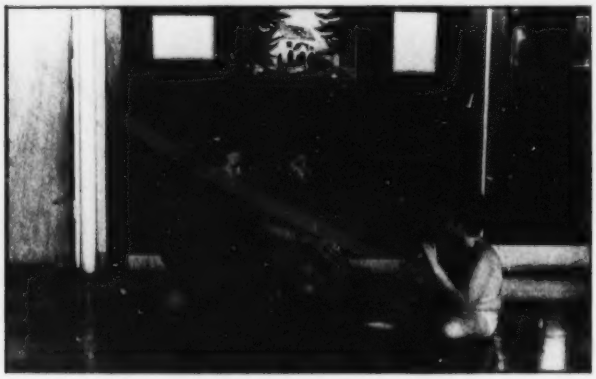
And, of course, at special school handicapped children themselves are made to think they are very different. They might develop a chip on their shoulders. They will take on or continue to exhibit odd behaviour because, after all, they never see how ordinary children behave, play, communicate and interact with one another.

The vast majority of educators and others would surely believe that every child has the right to be educated in a school community which reflects the variety and richness of his or her peers, and that no-one should deny that right unless it can be clearly shown that such membership would seriously interfere with the education of that child or other children.

Bishopswood Experience

Many people consider it an absolute nonsense to talk about educating severely mentally handicapped children alongside ordinary children. Let's not forget, of course, that until 1970 many people thought it an absolute nonsense even to talk about educating severely mentally handicapped children at all. They were proved wrong by the 1970 Act and developments since. What we have done at Bishopswood School proves even further that it is an absolute nonsense to *not* educate them alongside ordinary children.

Well, what have we done? The school only opened in 1977, purpose-built and hidden away; in fact inhabitants of Sonning Common objected to the fact that it was being built so close to the village, although it was half a mile away.



Then in January 1981 we transferred seven children from Bishopswood to Sonning Common Primary School. Because of falling rolls an empty classroom had become available, and the head of the primary had one of his own children at Bishopswood. We transferred the children with their teacher and helper to this empty classroom, bang in the middle of the junior part of the primary school.

It was an experiment and quite rightly selection of the children took place. The seven who transferred could all walk about, were reasonably toilet-trained, could sit down and with a little help, feed themselves. But they were selected.

The scheme was such a success that in February 1982 we transferred another eight children to the primary school, again with their teacher and classroom helper, and this time to an empty classroom in the infant part of the school. This time selection was less rigid and the group included an autistic boy, children who couldn't talk well or who were not toilet trained.

The following year a group of older children from Bishopswood transferred to the local comprehensive school, Chiltern Edge, and the following year we transferred our nursery class to the primary. The authority backed the move and at long last spent some money, giving £3,000 to put in sluices, a ramp, clothes washer and dryer. Now we hope for further funding to improve facilities at the comprehensive so that the children can receive the whole of their education at ordinary school.

I'm 99 per cent certain that this will happen in the next year or two, and then every single child at Bishopswood will have left and it will be empty. What a marvellous day that will be!

How it Works

So how do these classes work? The children have severe learning problems and for most of their time they are together with their specialist teacher, helper and facilities in their home bases. But don't forget these home bases are in the middle of the school, not hidden away with separate playgrounds and there are tremendous opportunities to go into main school classes where appropriate.

One very disturbed girl who was transferred in September 1983 now goes to the main school for swimming, games and typing classes. When she was at Bishopswood that same girl would go into severe tantrums several times a week, tearing her clothes off, throwing her shoes about, screaming and shouting. She has not seriously torn her uniform once in the two years she has been at Chiltern Edge because her self-image has been considerably enhanced.

We also transferred an autistic girl of thirteen who for the first time in her life has the opportunity of mixing with ordinary children. She can't speak, but main-school children have been learning sign language so that they can communicate with her.

At lunchtime and playtime there is complete social integration and you don't find the Bishopswood children all grouped together. They get a choice and don't have to go out if they don't want to. What is tremendous is to see the mainschool children who come in to the home base at playtime and talk and play with the ones who choose to remain inside.

Sally and Richard Greenhill

When we wrote an evaluation of the scheme the head of Chiltern Edge wrote saying: 'I think that you might well have considered another point on your report and that is the enormous advantage which our children have been given in handicap awareness.'

One of the Sonning Common teachers has studied the link between Bishopswood and the primary school. She sent out a questionnaire to 200 parents of the 'normal' children asking if they thought integration was a good thing. Eight per cent weren't sure, one per cent said no — but 91 per cent said yes, it was a good thing.

Advocates of separate schooling for children with severe learning problems maintain that the schools are a protection from a prejudiced world. I maintain that any prejudice that exists is the direct result of segregationalist policies and that with acceptance, protection becomes less necessary. Indeed our attempts at Bishopswood to integrate ought well prove to be a desirable advance in the quality and history of the education of mentally handicapped children.'

Note: More details of the Bishopswood integration scheme are available in the new CSIE fact sheet **Transferring Good Practice.** *Price 50p.*

A parent's story

From the moment Kirsty Arrondelle was diagnosed as having Down's Syndrome her parents were determined she should have as normal a life as possible. And for her mother and father, Elizabeth and David, even though it has been a hard and at times a lonely battle, that means first and foremost that Kirsty should be educated in an ordinary school.

Elizabeth Arrondelle

"Our quest for a totally integrated education has grown from our instinctive feelings that to minimise the significance of Kirsty's mental handicap as an isolating factor, would give her the best opportunity to be well accepted and to become a useful member of the community, both during and after her education.

We feel that separated special school education is misconceived at a fundemental level, and to remove a child from its natural environment is discriminatory and not conducive to acceptance in society.

We know that Kirsty has Down's Syndrome and therefore has special needs. It is because of our concern for the longer term — her life in the community *after* her education — that we see integrated schooling as a bedrock for later opportunities.

Not that we always felt so hopeful. When Kirsty was first born the prognosis was terribly gloomy and I was absolutely shattered. But by chance a nurse in the hospital had seen a newspaper article about the Down's Children's Association and a programme about it was being screened that very night on television.

The article and programme were encouraging, with ideas and suggestions on how to improve the condition of Down's babies that made me realise a lot could be done for Kirsty. We were all going to be very busy from now on providing as much mental and physical stimulation as possible, starting immediately.

One of the first things I had been told was that she would be unlikely to be able to breastfeed — but nevertheless with determination and considerable help from one of the nurses, by the end of the first week breast feeding had been established. So that was the first myth exploded and it gave me confidence to be guided by my own intuition.

Pre-School Years

I used to take her to the local leisure centre with me — she was happy in the creche while I played badminton and used the exercise equipment and then we would go swimming together. She loved this and I knew it was good for her to be handled by other people. A home tutor also came to see us and her expertise in teaching me how to help Kirsty was invaluable. Then, because her physical development was relatively slow, she started physio-therapy sessions at a local special school.

This was the first time I had ever seen so many handicapped children 'en masse'. I had never been to such a school before and didn't know what to expect. I was impressed by the dedication of the staff and their obvious love for the children in their care. but from what I observed I could see no advantages for Kirsty in this environment.

The help from the physio-therapist was excellent and we made many visits to her during the next few months. I was most grateful for this specialised help. But I declined an offer for her to attend the nursery unit there and instead she went to a local playgroup with other children from our neighbourhood. We literally had to programme Kirsty in many ways to aid her physical development, and to see children learning through play would be a good pattern for her to copy — mimicry being a natural attribute.

So on her third birthday Kirsty began her integrated education. Her development during the two years at the playgroup encouraged us to look forward to a continuation into the infants school where all the children from the playgroup would naturally progress. The quotation: 'Give me a child for his first seven years and I will show you the man' is no less true for Kirsty than any other child.

Starting at School

Our request to secure a place in the infants school was greeted with shaking heads — 'It is not usual for Down's children to go to ordinary schools'. But there had to be a first time so we could try if we wanted.

From this point we felt very much alone in our quest. It was new ground so no-one could really help. But we arranged to take Kirsty to meet the headmistress of Boyne Hill Infants School in Maidenhead, Berks and after a long discussion it was agreed to allow her to start at the school. As long as Kirsty was being educated and not becoming a passenger she was welcome at Boyne Hill.

Maidenhead Advertiser

Careful planning went on at the school. Some of the staff attended special training sessions and our home tutor had taken Kirsty into the school on several occasions before the new term began. She also continued her visits to the school for half the term to maintain the work they had been doing together at home.

Language development was a key factor and one of the areas that needed extra help. We knew that Kirsty would learn a tremendous amount from the children — she had always mixed well and proved a popular playmate. At this stage her peers were her best teachers and the confidence gained from the other children was quite remarkable.

Initially her span of concentration was very limited and the children questioned why she was allowed to play in the Wendy House when they were expected to work, but the class teacher explained her condition in a way they could understand and no more questions were asked. Eventually Kirsty's concentration improved to such an extent that she was reluctant to stop if she had not completed the set task.

Speech therapy sessions started after her first term and continued once a week at the health clinic and occasionally during school term throughout her time at Boyne Hill. There were ups and downs during the first few terms but with careful consideration and planning the problems were resolved and a successful formula worked out. I am sure that her development so far has been as a direct result of learning in conjunction with her schoolfriends.

The crucial time for developing language is in the early years, and from my visits to the special school I had seen little, if any, communication between the children. My impression was of an over-protective environment — literally behind locked doors, a necessary safeguard for those children who might wander into danger.

At Boyne Hill, Kirsty learned to find her way around a split-level site and could be relied upon to take herself to the appropriate destination whether it was main hall, classroom, annex or toilet. She also understood that no children were allowed to leave the premises without an adult. She had a chance to find independence and a wide range of activities.

The success of Kirsty's integration this far was as a direct result of the resourcefulness of the headmistress and her staff. No extra help was at hand. In fact in our case a financial saving has been made so far — the cost of a place at special school is far higher than in a mainstream one. If that is not an 'efficient use of resources' I don't know what is.

Moving On

We are now most anxious to see that Kirsty can continue her education in the mainstream until she is 19. At the case conference held on her eighth birthday it was decided to start the multi-professional assessment procedure to establish Kirsty's special needs, and hopefully obtain some back-up support in the classroom as a result. We emphasised at every opportunity that she should remain in ordinary school.

We prepared our representation with great care and thought, and approached several suitable people to give us written support including our own GP and a playleader from a holiday playgroup organised by our local branch of MENCAP which Kirsty had attended since she was three. Our documents were presented within the statutory 29 days, but there is no time limit on the LEA to produce the draft statement, and this always seemed unfair to us.

Meanwhile we approached the head teachers of at least four junior schools in the area and without exception all would accept Kirsty, but stated that in fairness to their staff and the other pupils, some extra help would be needed in the classroom. Not an unreasonable suggestion, and one with which we wholeheartedly agreed.

However, inspite of hoping the draft statement would be prepared before the end of the summer term, there were many delays. First Kirsty was found to have a degree of hearing loss and the teacher for the hearing impaired who would have to prepare a report, was on holiday. When a draft statement was prepared it was not complete — no school had been named. Then a meeting to discuss this was double-booked and postponed.

Then when the meeting was finally held we were not allowed an advocate, and at the end were asked: 'What would your reaction be if we offered Kirsty a special school place? Would it be in the negative?' I honestly don't think we could have put our case for an ordinary school placement more clearly. The suggestion was so completely against all that we had been saying since the beginning of the assessment that we were stunned and bitterly disappointed. We asked the special education adviser to visit the schools we had looked at, but by now felt we were playing a game of charades.

Another Assessment

By this time my husband had been offered promotion and we decided to move to Hertfordshire. But we still wanted a satisfactory completed draft statement so that Kirsty could continue her ordinary school education with the right support. Luckily she was offered a place at the primary school near our new home — they were full but they accepted Kirsty *because* she had special needs!

We are now going through the whole assessment procedure again with the new authority; the thought is daunting but with the support of our family and friends and the staff at Boyne Hill proving that the exercise had been successful, we have the determination to carry on, firmly convinced that Kirsty should continue to be educated in an ordinary school.

Our aim is for Kirsty to be accepted for the individual that she is, without pity. By a genetic accident she was born with Down's Syndrome which is caused by one extra chromosome. It is up to us to make sure she has the extra help she therefore needs to enable her to be a useful member of society.

This can be achieved by allowing her to remain — just an ordinary schoolgirl!'

Note: The fuller story of Kirsty's early days at school and her parent's battle for an ordinary education is described in the CSIE fact sheet **Kirsty — the struggle for a place in an ordinary school,** *price 20p.*

Maggie Hall

Progress to practice — a new approach

If you are interested in special educational needs then you are interested in all educational needs, argued Denis Mongon, advisory teacher with the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), vice-chairman of NUT's Special Education Advisory Committee and member of the Fish Committee. You cannot make decisions about one without influencing the other; the Fish Report confirms this wider view, seeing integration as an inevitable part of the whole comprehensive system.

Seana Cahill

Denis Mongon

"The distinction between special educational needs and educational needs has some pragmatic value because it attracts resources and may therefore continue to have some use. But somewhere behind that distinction we have to have a clear view that we can no longer be concerned with a marginal aspect of the service, a marginal aspect of provision, a marginal group of pupils. If we are interested in this field, then we are interested in the whole field of education.

What is now quite clear is that the provision for children who are said to have special needs has followed developments in the mainstream of education. If we had not had in 1870 and 1880 Education Acts which said that the whole population should be compulsorily educated in schools, then we would not have drawn into these schools and identified the first group of children with physical impairments and disabilities.

Later, in the 1944 *and* 1945 Education Acts we had the categories of children with special needs and the tools of testing which said this child fits into that group, this child into another group, and we can educate them in these groups because their dispositions are for a certain kind of lifestyle eventually.

So historically you have that trend, and my own personal experience is similar. As a member of the NUT committee I decided that when I went to meetings I would bring up the subject of special education everytime it was possible. What happened was that I could speak on every single thing that came up because there actually wasn't anything discussed that you couldn't make that connection with. Mainstream and special education are intertwined in a way that cannot separate them.

Purpose of Education

On the face of it there has been great progress in the time since 1870 and 1945. There are more children who attend school, there are bigger schools, better equipped schools, better pupil/teacher ratios.

But one of the difficulties we come up against is that we cannot debate the notion of progress in the abstract, and there has to be a clear notion of what it is we think we are progressing towards. Personally, I believe the ideal of a compulsory state education system is that it should be about equality of opportunity and about the right of people to have equal lives and status and equal opportunities to live these lives with some kind of self-fulfilment.

So it is of great regret to me that one of the results of the state education system at present is that there are large numbers of children who are given a sense of failure early in their lives. I'm not just talking about the two per cent or the 18 per cent, I'm talking about up to 60 per cent of pupils who arrive at the end of their secondary school careers and something like a quarter of them are not even bothering to turn up. The message coming through to them is that if they are not getting the kinds of grades at exams that their friends are going to get, they really are second-rate. And the evidence coming through to us is that we still have the same groups of children failing, we still have the characteristics of attainment and non-attainment between boys and girls, people of different ethnic background, social background and class.

Value Judgements

What we now have at ILEA at least is an attempt to address these issues, so that we have initiatives on race and sex and under-achievement among working class children. But if all we go on doing when children arrive at 11 is give them a reading test and on the basis of that create eight streams, then things haven't changed. We might as well still have a grammar school, a secondary modern school and a technical school because what we are doing is placing a value on something — the value of being able to read.

We're saying you're actually a different sort of person because you can read better and we're going to treat you in a different kind of way. The resources will go to the upper type of group because they'll go in the sixth form. The better you are at education, the more money is spent on you.

So if the comprehensive principal is one that we're going to stick by, then we have to talk about mixed ability classrooms so that children do maths, PE and science in the same groups. We have to look at

different ways of teaching, too, creating collaborative, problem-solving work in the classroom so that children are the creators of their own learning. I have not yet come across a child who is non-learner. He or she might very well not be interested in the things I want to teach but that's a problem for me that I have to work out.

What we have now is an opportunity. We are at a threshold or crossroads where the kinds of things we do in comprehensive schools can create an opportunity for us to embrace more and more children. If we say our concern is for two per cent or 18 per cent it's not enough. We really have to be concerned about what's happening to the 100 per cent. We have to lobby for *all* children even if we might have our specialist interests.

Fish Report

Does the Fish Report do any of this? I hope so. We've all put a lot of work into it and we hope that it encourages these sort of ideas. I'd like to make six main points.

● **Basic principle** The first is the question of basic principles. What Fish says is that the aim of education is the right to personal autonomy, the right to employment, the right to a proper fulfilment of the leisure you have outside your employment, all these are the same for all children. It's important to have this matter of principle unambiguously taken on board, and with that goes the definition of handicap — 'relative and dynamic' is the phrase used in the Fish Report. I can say with some degree of accuracy that somebody has a disability. But what can be achieved depends on the curriculum. Integration is a process and not a state, says Fish. It's something we are working on and developing.

Sally and Richard Greenhill

Integration at Quintin Kynaston School, ILEA.

Fish Report

Basic principles

The long term aims of education for all children and young people include the achievement of responsible personal autonomy and full participation in the communities in which they live. These aims are expressed practically in terms of employment, independent living and adequate financial and other arrangements which allow an acceptable range of opportunities, choices and life styles. ***The aims of education for children and young people with disabilities and signficant difficulties are the same as those for all children and young people.*** *They should have opportunities to achieve these aims, to associate with their contemporaries, whether similarly disabled or not, and have access to the whole range of opportunities in education, training, leisure and community activities available to all. Disabilities and significant difficulties do not diminish the right to equal access to and participation in, society.*

Equal access to the participation in society demands respect for children and young people with disabilities and difficulties and their families. Wherever they are educated, work and enjoy their leisure, these children and young people, like all others, whatever their race, class or gender, must be acknowledged as participants with current and potential abilities to contribute to society.

All those responsible for providing services to children and young people, whether or not they have specific responsibilities for those with disabilities and significant difficulties, should accept the aim of integration for all. Provision of services that are additional to or different from those available to all should be directed towards this aim.

It follows from these considerations that our definition of handicap is dynamic and relative. Disabilities and difficulties become more or less handicapping depending on the expectations of others and on social contexts. Handicaps thus arise from the mismatch between the intellectual, physical, emotional and social behaviour and aspirations of the individual and the expectations, appropriate or otherwise of the community and society at large. Individuals with disabilities or significant difficulties may be handicapped by their own attitude to them and by the attitudes of others. Of equal significance, the degree to which the individual is handicapped is determined by the educational, social, physical and emotional situations which he or she encounters. Handicapping effects will vary from situation to situation and may change over time.

Most children and young people are expected to move from stage to stage through education and training in a fixed chronological sequence and time scale. The handicapping effects of some disabilities can be increased if educational and social arrangements do not allow for flexibility in the time over which goals in development can be achieved.

It is also important to recognise that integration in society ***is a process not a state.*** *It is not simply a question of placement in the same groups and institutions as others. It is a process which requires continued and planned interaction with contemporaries and freedom to associate in different groups. The potentially adverse effects of isolation and segregation, in whatever context, including comprehensive institutions, are now well known, including the risks to social competence and to the development of a positive self-identity. The process of integration should be actively developed wherever the individual lives, learns, works and enjoys leisure activities. Placement in the wider group or same institution as non-handicapped contemporaries, although an essential prerequisite to effective integration, does not necessarily result in the process being actively developed. The process of integration should form an essential element in all education wherever it takes place.*

● **Teacher development** There does need to be an enormous amount of teacher training. I think it is very hard for a group of people who have been trained to believe that specialist teaching and special needs is not their job, to have that turned round and be told after all, that the responsibility is theirs. They must have specialist help and they need support.

● **School development** We have a curriculum working party, we have an anti-racist working party, we have technical, vocational, primary and secondary school liaison working parties. What we want is a school development plan that covers all these. We don't want a special needs initiative, we want a school development plan in which the place of special educational needs is clearly identified because it's got to be part of the whole thing. It's got to be increasingly less a separate issue and increasingly more an intrinsic issue.

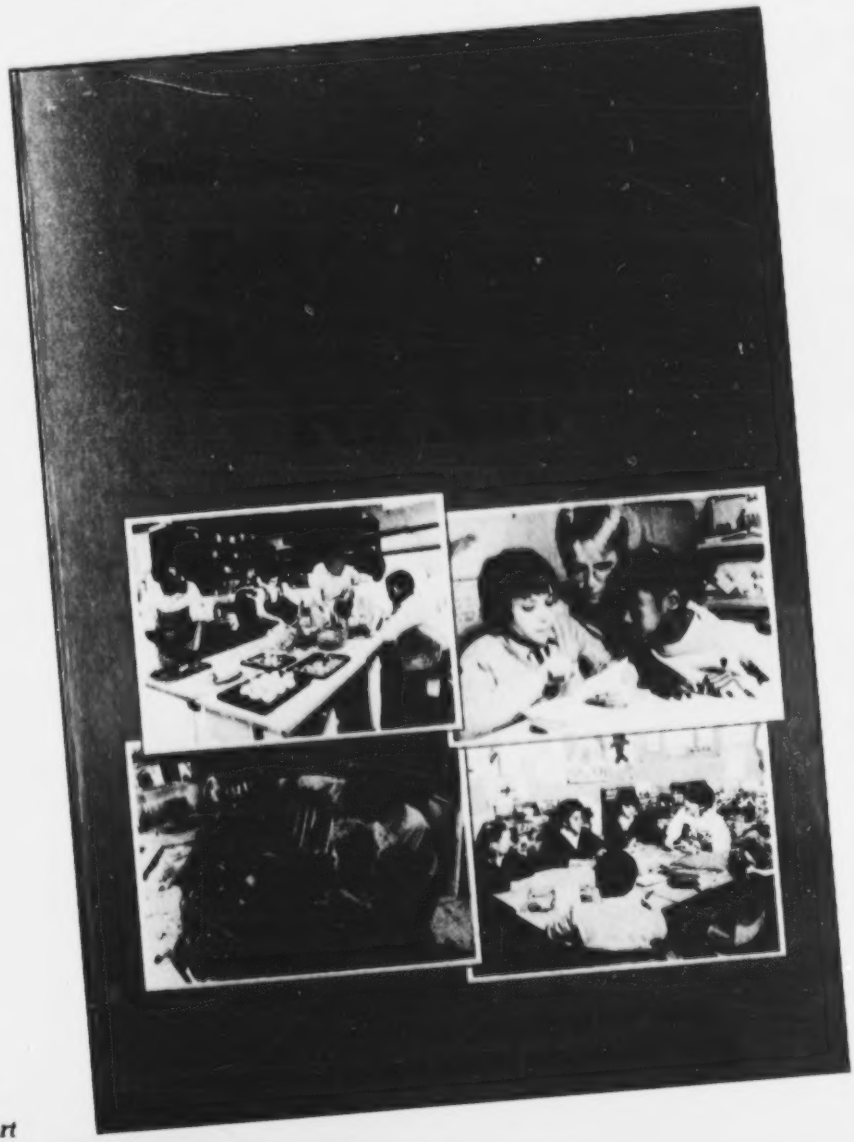
● **Groups of schools** The Fish Report follows on from the Thomas Report on primary education and we take the point that a group of schools should together take responsibility for the education of the community that they serve and for *all* the people in it — children, secondary pupils and students up to the age of 21. There are a lot of difficulties with that idea — parental choice is the most significant of them. But if you can get that kind of collaboration going well, then parents will realise that the best option is to go with it.

● **Special services** We're quite clear about the need for special services. We suggest a model for each division in the authority which would contain four or five clusters of schools with a learning support service and an emotional and behavioural difficulties service, and that service could contract in the schools. Once you have a service that isn't tied to bricks and mortar, the flexibility breaks down the division between ordinary class teacher and specialist teacher.

● **Parents' role** There is no ambiguity in the Fish Report about the role of parents, either. I don't think there has been any ambiguity about what the role *should* have been so far, but in some cases parents have been allowed to participate in the education of their children, while in many cases they haven't. There needs to be a fundamental shift in the attitudes of professionals. Parents must be brought in as fully participating members in the education of their children.

Overall, the Fish Report is not just a model for good special needs education but a good model for the development of the whole service. It's our opportunity to improve education for all, and we daren't let it slip.'

Note: The Fish Report is available from the Order Processing Department, ILEA Centre for Learning Resources, 275 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5QZ. £8 plus 80p p&p (£5 plus 50p p&p for ILEA employees).



The Fish Report

Talking points. . .

The Early Years

'Everything happened by complete chance. The problem is getting the right information to the right people. I was fortunate in that the home tutor saw the sort of organisations that would be helpful to us such as MENCAP (Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults), the Pre-school Playgroup Association (PPA) and the Toy Library Association'
(Elizabeth Arrondelle).

The pre-school years are crucial, both in detecting and providing for special needs in young children, and in setting the course for a fully integrated education.

One working group concentrated on this important area, agreeing the need for special educational provision from birth to five and also for better co-ordination of information on what was actually available, including the various voluntary organisations which provide support and facilities.

Pre-school Priorities

The working group, led by Patricia Potts, a lecturer in special education at the Open University, divided into sub-groups for a role-playing session. Each member took on the identity of health worker, social worker, teacher, volunteer, parent or community worker and discussed what they felt were the main priorities. These included:

● **Better provision** Nursery centres for *all* children, regardless of special needs were considered an essential development, run jointly by social services, health and education authorities in each area, with a core staff plus peripatetic professionals such as speech therapists and physio-therapists. Groups started through voluntary organisations such as PPA often have good integration practice and should be encouraged to continue, with support services and funding available.

● **Variety of choice** Parents in the group gave examples of playschemes and clubs run all day by social services on a 'Drop In' basis. But these should have medical in-put so that they are geared to helping on assessment when a young child has special needs. Variety of choice is necessary ranging from opportunity clubs to toy libraries, full-time nurseries and part-time playgroups because these fulfill different needs at different times.

● **Parent's Needs** It isn't just the children who have special needs but their parents, and a vital role of the professional and voluntary organisations involved is to support them, too. Often these groups are the first to notice a handicap and should have the correct information to pass on. Family and paediatric centres where parents could drop in for specialised help were also suggested. However, parents should be encouraged to take on an active role in the management of groups, rather than just being seen as subsidiary helpers or dependants in need of advice.

● **Home visiting** There was some ambivalence about home visiting schemes since it was felt that by their very nature they do not help to start the integration process because able-bodied children are not involved, Nor do they help change the pattern of provision at present available. However, used in conjunction with opportunity groups, playgroups, nursery or family drop-in, homevisiting has great value and can co-ordinate services.

● **Early diagnosis** There are a large number of children in pre-school ordinary settings with special needs, from speech and language problems to development delay, mild sensory handicap or emotional or behavioural difficulties. This is the prime time to pick up special needs and perhaps prevent a small handicap developing into a larger one. Most benefit from early diagnosis and treatment, and professionals working with under-5s need to be trained to pick up the warning signs.

Ideal Starting Point

Under-five was seen as the ideal phase to start integration. For the child with a handicap it becomes a natural part of life to mix with children of all types, and for the child without any specific problem the prejudices about disablement will not build up. Under-fives will be accepting the normality of disability from the beginning.

Yet it was felt in the group that current political thinking, far from encouraging the process, is actively going against it. 'There are value systems operating which say that though education is a good thing, day care for under-fives is a bad thing' was one comment. 'Similarly, playgroups are "good", but full-time nurseries are "bad", only suitable for so-called disadvantaged children.'

'There is a subtle pressure on women to stay at home with their children, and this will influence the development of comprehensive community-based provision for all pre-school children', said another group member. 'There cannot be valuable integration at this age if there is no setting in which to put it in motion.'

Under-fives education in general and special needs provision in particular is too often seen as an option rather than as an essential part of the whole spectrum of children's development, was the group's conclusion.

Parents

'Parents are consistently in a dilemma on how hard a line to take. Although you are told that it is your right to have a partnership approach and so on, you know you are actually dealing with people who control the definitions of your child and his or her future. You're walking a fine tightrope about not upsetting people and you are very vulnerable.'

(Parent's Group)

The partnership of parents with professionals in seeking integration for special needs children was a recurring talking point. Many felt that the recommendations of the 1981 Act are not being carried through, though this varies from one LEA to another and the increasing number of parent pressure groups are making their presence felt.

Some, including the Parents Campaign for Integrated Education in London (PCIEL), were represented at the conference. There were also individual parents of children with varying disabilities, all aiming for, or already achieving, ordinary schooling.

But for many it is a battle and one which parents often seem to fight single-handed with little back-up from the authorities. The morning working group on parental involvement, led by Jan Read who is a lecturer in applied social studies at Warwick University and herself closely involved in Family Focus a parent support group in Coventry, highlighted this.

For instance, doubts were expressed about how much weight is accorded to the parents' knowledge about their child and how much effort professionals make to seek this out. 'You've known your child for 24 hours a day all his or her life' said one parent. 'Frankly you resent a stranger coming in and pronouncing on his or her needs after about twenty minutes.'

Similarly there was scepticism among parents over the reality of partnership and concern over the unequal balance of power in situations involving themselves and professionals.

Some parents expressed worries about getting into the statementing procedure at all if there was any chance of avoiding it. It was felt that statements are often worded in such broad terms that in practice a child is given little protection by them. On the other hand the process can restrict rights of free choice, and bring families more under the control of the authorities.

Changes for the Better

Above all the formation of more parents' groups was thought to be very important way of improving the situation. The small number already in existence are seeking to put problems right, but more can campaign on a wider scale, offering support and information. Individual action is more limited in results and can leave parents vulnerable. Together they can push for some of the following:

● **National Parent Network** Local action and knowledge is immensely valuable, but the formation of a national network of parent groups will lead to a central exchange of information and a more powerful platform from which to push for an end to segregation. Such a network could also involve individual parents who live in isolated areas and do not have easy access to a local group.

● **LEA Support** LEAs should give parents clear information about their responsibilities and rights, and explain the assessment and statement procedures in an understandable, written form. They should also inform parents of the availability of local services such as speech therapy and of the various voluntary organisations which can give support. Some do this routinely, but others, inspite of the guidelines laid down in the 1981 Act, are still reluctant.

● **Child development** Professionals should maximise parents' knowledge of their child's development, particularly when preparing evidence for a statement. Techniques such as PIP charts are available and well-developed but pre-suppose a commitment to parental involvement by professionals.

● **Information** Progressive professionals can press with parents for local policy changes to ensure their rights of access to all records and decision-making processes such as case conferences.

● **Advocacy** Similar pressure should make it policy at a local level for parents to be able to bring in a friend or advocate to all meetings and reviews.

● **Appeals** There should also be local policy decisions on the composition of appeals committees to help reduce any bias, and there should be an attempt to recognize different interests. Examples were given in the group of recent appeals which made a fair hearing virtually impossible.

Parents' Rights

A great deal of the final conference discussion was devoted to parents' rights and working together with professionals, with practical solutions.

Jan Read, for instance, mentioned a group of parents who got together with interested professionals and spent a day working out tactics and ways of coping with the various pitfalls it is possible to fall into during the statementing process. Another speaker said that in his opinion statements were often: 'A mish-mash of professional jargon. I would suggest guidelines of acceptable language which makes the professionals accountable to the clients.'

Finally one of the professionals said that in his experience they see themselves on the side of parents and children, but find they are hampered by those with control over money and resources — the education authorities.

'There is a tension between the professionals such as teachers and educational psychologists who are trying to push out the boundaries, and the education authorities who are accountable to their committees', he explained. 'But there is a statutory right for parents to see reports and discuss recommendations, so please use the professionals. We are not all fuddy-duddys from the middle-ages who are against you.'

Integration in Action

'The money just isn't there with certain authorities. You can't talk about changes in administration and extra resources without that.'

'I'm worried about curriculum levels. It's alright at Bishopswood where children with special needs are taught in a home base, but what about when integration is on an individual basis?'

Teachers' comments.

Throughout the day of the conference, side-by-side with affirmation of the ideals of integration, people voiced concern about the apparent conflict between philosophy versus practicality.

Unco-operative LEAs, poor assessment procedures, lack of money and training opportunities, worries about teaching and staffing, shortage of aids, resources and specialist help — these were the realities for many parents and professionals present, however committed they might be to integration.

In fact, during the Integration in Action working group which followed Roger Kidd's talk about Bishopswood, he and Oxfordshire educational psychologist Robin Bartlett were at pains to point out that Bishopswood is not typical of the county as a whole and many schools are at a much earlier stage of integration.

'Take care and don't rush things. You can't force integration,' was their advice. 'First you need a sympathetic special school head, then a sympathetic primary school head. Use local initiative, but do research, and demonstrate interest before approaching an LEA.'

Practical Answers

During this group discussion and in platform and audience exchange later, practical ways round some of the problems and pitfalls were suggested. The following are just a few examples:

● **Local action** The main difficulty in getting LEAs to think about integration in practice is the let-out clause in the 1981 Act — the efficient use of resources. If it can be shown that this proviso in the Act can be met in an ordinary school, then LEAs could be accused of not complying with the law or at any rate their explanations questioned by refusing integration. A grassroots local guide to legal rights would be useful to parents and professionals.

● **Curriculum** Educational pyschologists might be able to advise parents, schools and teachers on ways of meeting individual children's needs within the general curriculum. The development of special needs departments and co-ordinators within schools over the next few years would also help tremendously. But in practice even severely mentally handicapped children gain from interaction, observation and play, even if they are placed in a class with a younger age group.

● **Statementing** One parent's child with Down's Syndrome had gone into an ordinary school before the 1981 Act came into force and had special help without a statement. Other parents were worried that a statement equalled special school. Procedure varied from area to area, and a suggestion was made for local guidelines on this and on the language used in statements.

● **Specialist help** Similar guidelines are needed from LEAs as to where and what specialist help is available. For instance, speech therapists are employed by the health authority and if integration leads to the loss of this support, then in the first instance this is the authority to chase.

● **Pupil preparation** Schools had different methods of preparing pupils. At Bishopswood 3rd year comprehensive children visited the special school for two terms to make relationships. One head of a special needs department at a comprehensive ran a joint CSE course with a school for physically handicapped children. A Coventry school paired children from mainstream and special school according to interests. It was agreed that this pupil preparation for integration is vital.

● **Cluster schools** Clusters of schools within a neighbourhood catering for special needs, as recommended in the ILEA's Fish Report, is a good starting point for integration. Resources, expertise and specialist knowledge could then be concentrated. Regionalisation like this might mean transporting children and loss of some neighbourhood contact, but as an interim stage this is usually better than no integration at all.

● **Access** It had been worked out by the ILEA that it cost not less than a quarter of a million pounds to make a fairly typical 3-storey school completely barrier free. But as Denis Mongon stressed, it is possible to do a great deal with fairly minimal funds, and he suggested as a first step that schools do an inventory of physical resources. It was also suggested by Peter Newell of the Children's Legal Centre and leader of the working group on the law, that more accurate costings should be made comparing special and ordinary school provision. Too often access is an excuse rather than good reason for barring integration.

● **Funding** There was no doubt that an Act that is put through without promise of extra funding is difficult to carry through, and no-one underestimated the problems. But in practice it is usually no more expensive and even cheaper to place children in ordinary school rather than special school, where in Roger Kidd's estimation it costs around £5,000 per year per pupil. LEA's who believe in integration, have diverted money from other areas to put in ramps, lifts, toilet facilities, etc. If one LEA can do it, so can others.

Host School

'It's alright in middle-class Oxfordshire' was one comment made about the Bishopswood scheme from the audience. Replied Roger Kidd: 'But I think it would work just as well in working-class Liverpool. Indeed we have working class children in our schools.'

Integration has been shown to improve the quality of school life, fostering a more caring and sympathetic atmosphere, and developing self-esteem not only in the pupils with special needs but also other children. Most are proud of what they are achieving.

But where teachers are coping with other stresses, such as truanting, class disruption and the needs of multi-cultural pupils, they need all the help they can get. Support and training for teachers was another recurring theme of the day and it was agreed unanimously that teachers needed this if they are to take on a new role in the classroom enthusiastically and successfully.

There are now far more teacher-training courses in special needs, many for in-service training. One example that came up during the conference was a Bristol school which closed for a week so that all teachers could attend a special course! It was also felt to be helpful for teachers to attend special schools to study methods and for special schools to be used as resource centres.

A New Philosophy

'If we reconceptualise special needs as being the problem of providing high quality education for all children, do we not set ourselves a target that is so enormous and so unobtainable that in practice people will feel they cannot attain it?'

(A delegate)

The main message of the conference was the need to adopt a more progressive policy towards integration as outlined in Denis Mongon's talk. But there were some present who felt it was enough to push for special education without embracing even wider needs. As the delegate quoted above went on to say:

'If you put the gap between general philosophical ideas and "What shall we do next Monday morning?" so large that it involves everyone you know in the entire education authority, then you won't be able to see the end of it or even take a few steps towards it.'

But in answer, Denis Mongon repeated that this was a basic principle over which there could be no compromise. If there was a compromise, then it was a quite different road, and in his opinion this one was taking special education where it should go:

'On Monday morning we want to ask ourselves what we could do that would move the integration issue in the right direction. I defy anyone to say that there is nothing they could do.'

Starting points

The workshop showed some pointers when two groups, one led by Denis Mongon and the other by Mark Vaughan of CSIE, read the principles outlined in the Fish Report (see page 11) and discussed their implications. Points raised included:

● **Integration process** The description of integration as a process in the Fish Report was warmly welcomed. This phrase said a lot, implying a continuing, forward-moving series of actions and activities. It is very important for all LEAs to see this as the beginning of an era of change which the Fish Report now heralds for ILEA.

● **Education aims** There was also a warm welcome for the basic principle in the Fish Report that: 'The aim of education for children and young people with

disabilities and significant difficulties are the same as those for all children and young people.'

● **Behaviour problems** Some group members questioned whether the Fish Report meant *all* children, should be integrated. 'It would be madness to bring in "behaviourly disturbed" children into an unprepared school,' was one comment. One group felt that the real problem here is in the failure of the 1981 Education Act to resolve the issue of what is an emotional problem in a child and what is a behavioural one.

● **Value judgements** Comprehensive education as a whole is based too much on value judgements and one discussion group considered the ways in which schools differentiate. Banding, testing, display of best work, segregating those with special needs — all are value judgements and separate children from one another in a success/failure sense. Instead it should be accepted that everyone is different, and that these differences can be valued equally. To *separate* is negative, to *distinguish* is positive.

● **Curriculum** LEAs and schools need to become more flexible in attitudes towards curriculum and resources generally if education of all children is to be achieved successfully and encompass the varying needs of individual pupils, including those wanting special provision.

● **Unacceptable prejudice** Attitudes towards disabled people today are still generally unacceptable and discriminatory, and they begin at the cradle. There is prejudice in books, newspapers, on TV and in the media overall, and many stories passed on to children perpetuate the myths and misconceptions. Such attitudes have to be confronted at a fundamental level if there is to be real equality of opportunity in education and in life generally.

● **Segregation** More research is necessary on the effects of segregation. 'It has to be said that a lot of segregated settings for children with special needs, actually end by damaging the child' said one group. Differences in finance, resources, social integration and general development need to be compared for concrete evidence in support of integration.

● **Special role** Special educators in ordinary schools have a very important role to play in putting over positive aspects of their work, showing that special needs children can succeed in settings different to those traditionally expected.

Integrated Staff

A final and most crucial point was made by Daphne Payne, a teacher of deaf children in ordinary schools who is hearing impaired herself. 'One thing we have all been missing at this conference is that you will never have true integration in the classroom until you have it in the staff room,' she said. 'Handicapped children need to see handicapped adults working in positions of authority and successful in their work.'

Daphne Payne went on to ask for more support for the education of 16-19 year olds with special needs at school and at further education colleges. Early integration really comes in three stages — pre-school integration, integration in school, and integration in further and higher education.

'Then', commented Denis Mongon, comes the fourth stage when you've had all this education and learning — are there opportunities for you in life? And that's really what the other three stages are all about.'